

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-mentioned Official Action in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 8 and 10-13 are now presented for examination. Claims 8 and 12 have been amended to define still more clearly what Applicant regards as his invention, in terms which distinguish over the art of record. Claim 18 has been added to assure Applicant of the full measure of protection to which he deems himself entitled. Claim 8 is the only independent claim.

Claims 8 and 10 through 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claim 8 has been objected to in that the limitation “wherein the two peripheral surface areas of said image bearing member against which said two second regulating members abut are inside the two peripheral surface areas of said image bearing member against which said two first regulating members abut in a longitudinal direction of said image bearing member. said second regulating member abuts against an area of said image bearing member different from an area against which said first regulating member abuts in a rotational axial direction of a surface of said image bearing member” is unclear as to what the term “inside” refers to and just how large the various peripheral surfaces are. Claim 8 has been amended to remove the unclear objected-to terms and to clarify the claim limitations. It is believed that Claim 8 as currently amended fully meets the requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claims 8, and 10 through 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,471,286 (Tanaka). With regard to the claims as currently amended, this rejection is respectfully traversed.

Independent Claim 8 as currently amended is directed to image forming apparatus in which a rotatable image bearing member bears an electrostatic image. A first developer carrying member carries a developer and develops the electrostatic image. The first developer is opposed to the image bearing member with a first gap. A first pair of regulating members regulate the first gap. The first pair of regulating members are in contact with one end portion and the other end portion in the rotational axial direction of the image bearing member, respectively. A second developer carrying member carries a developer and develops the electrostatic image. The second developer carrying member is disposed downstream of the first developer carrying member in the rotating direction of the image bearing member and is opposed to the image bearing member a second gap. A second pair of regulating members regulate the second gap and are in contact with one end portion and the other end portion of the rotational axial direction of the image bearing member, respectively. Positions with which the first pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member do not overlap with positions, with which the second pair of regulating members are in contact, of the image bearing member in the rotational axial direction of the image bearing member.

In Applicant's view, Tanaka discloses a developing unit that has first and second developing rollers supplying a photosensitive member with developer having the same color. Plural spacers are provided on the developing unit, so that when the developing unit is advanced such that it is pressed against the photosensitive drum, these spacers contact the photosensitive drum and maintain predetermined spacing or gaps therebetween between the first and second developing rollers and the photosensitive drum. For example, in one embodiment, a spacer is provided at each longitudinal end of each developing roller. In another embodiment, a spacer is

provided at a single end of each developing roller as well as at an intermediate position between the developing rollers.

According to the invention defined in Claim 8 as currently amended, a first pair of regulating members regulate a first gap between the first developer carrying member and the image bearing member and a second pair of regulating members regulate a second gap between the second developer carrying member and the image bearing member. The positions with which the first pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member do not overlap with positions with which the second pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member in the rotational axial direction of the image bearing member. Advantageously, the first and second regulating members are disposed without being superposed upon each other in the longitudinal direction so that the same peripheral surface of the image bearing member is prevented from being excessively abraded and the life of the image bearing member is lengthened.

Tanaka shows an image forming apparatus in Fig. 2 that has a first developer carrying member 2 with a first pair of opposite end regulating members 3 and 4 and a second developer carrying member 5 with a second pair of opposite end regulating members 6 and 7. The regulating member 4 and the regulating member 7 are brought into contact at the same position in the rotational axis direction of the image bearing member 1 and the regulating member 3 and the regulating member 6 are brought into contact at the same position in the rotational axis direction of the image bearing member. Tanaka further shows an image forming apparatus in Fig. 7 wherein the first regulating member for the developer carrying member 2 and the second

regulating member 7 for the developer carrying member 5 are brought into contact at the same position in the rotational axis direction of the image bearing member 1.

In contrast to Tanaka's arrangement, the same position in the rotational axis direction is contacted by regulating members for both developer carrying members, it is a feature of Claim 8 as currently amended that the positions the first pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member do not overlap the positions the second pair of regulating members are in contact with the image bearing member. Accordingly, it is not seen that Tanaka in any manner teaches or suggests the features of Claim 8. It is therefore believed that Claim 8 as currently amended is completely distinguished from Tanaka and is allowable.

Newly added Claim 18 depends from independent Claim 8 and recites further features of Claim 8 which are believed to be shown in the drawings and disclosed in the specification. No new matter is believed to have been added.

For the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that the present invention, as recited in independent claim 8, is patentably defined over the cited art, whether that art is taken individually or in combination.

Dependent claims 10-12, 13 and 18 also should be deemed allowable, in their own right, for defining other patentable features of the present invention in addition to those recited in independent claim 8. Further individual consideration of these dependent claims is requested.

Applicants further submit that this Amendment After Final Rejection places this application in condition for allowance. This Amendment was not earlier presented because Applicants believed that the prior Amendment placed the application in condition for allowance.

Accordingly, entry of the instant Amendment, as an earnest attempt to advance prosecution and reduce the number of issues, is requested under 37 CFR 1.116.

Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the above-noted Office Action and an early Notice of Allowance are also requested.

Applicants' attorney, William M. Wannisky, may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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